

## **Stress: What Do We Do with It?**

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### **Abstract**

The presentation and ultimate paper will explore effective ways for educators to effectively manage stress. The goal of the presentation/paper is to present specific techniques, i.e. cognitive psychology, meditation, release/removal of toxic substances in the body, positive outlook and organizational tactic. Theories toward alleviating stress with the above technique will be based on the work of Andrew Weil, Deepak Chopra, Carol Dweck, Steven Covey and Albert Ellis. The presentation will conclude with an exercise of guided imagery inspired by Iyanla Vanzant.

### **Introduction**

Why write about stress? It can have deleterious effects on the mind, body, and spirit!

Albert Ellis, famous for his “Rational-Emotive Theory” called those thoughts that swirl around in one’s head while attempting to fall asleep, “stinkin-thinking”. Stress affects the body in numerous ways: thinning hair (or complete loss), disease, anxiety, sometimes leading to panic attacks, nails bitten down to the stubs and/or insomnia! The spirit *wilts* under stress; like a flower that has been deprived of oxygen, water, or food. With the inevitable “wilting” comes the heaviness of depression, which left unchecked, could lead to a major depressive episode filled with suicidal thoughts.

### **Purpose**

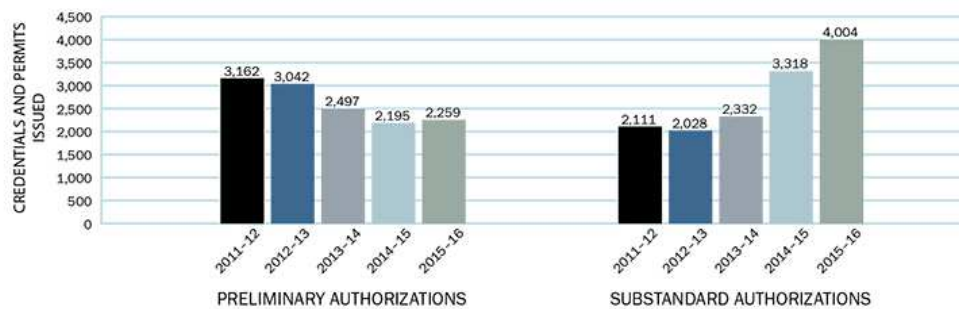
The purpose of the presentation/paper is to provide evidence based strategies to alleviate stress and prevent recidivism in the field of education. Those educators (and others) will be able to remain in the profession, leading a productive career and experience gratifying moments!

### **Education Specialists**

The author spent over a decade working with exceptional students: those diagnosed with autism, ADD/ADHD, Down's Syndrome, and emotionally challenged. Lessons were designed to meet general education standards, but with so many modifications/accommodations intertwined to make sure one could complete a lesson before meltdowns, vocal eruptions, a flying object on a trajectory, or a student's sudden exit from the classroom.

As an education specialist, one is expected to not only teach the "unteachable" (as some have mistakenly described the students) but administer both formal and informal assessments, collaborate with other Designated Instructional Service (DIS) providers for either initial Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) or annual or triennial IEPs. Parent conferences and service to the school also compete for an education specialist's time.

According to Thomas and Hammond (2017), the shortage of special education teachers in California is severe. "... in some counties, up to 86.5% may retire. With an aging teacher workforce and fewer qualified new special education teachers, special education shortages may become even worse in future years." (accessed 5/7/17).

**Figure 2: Trends in Special Education Teacher Supply***Preliminary and substandard authorizations issued, 2011-12 to 2015-16*

Source: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

## Strategize

Among the mine fields stress entraps the mind, body, and spirit lies a combatant too strong to allow one to succumb to the eventual explosion. It is positive thought! It is touted by therapists such as Ellis, Beck and Skinner. In other words, when the mind, body and spirit are focused on negative thoughts, ruminations jiggling the brain that most often are false, little else can emerge to positive outcomes. However, when one applies effective rational beliefs and replace previous self-defeating ones, (Ellis, n.d.) then the mind, body and spirit are given the space to create, breathe deeply, live freely, and enjoy a coexistence with ruminating thoughts that do not overtake the psyche.

According to Carol Dweck, (2006) a growth mindset can free oneself of stress in that it motivates one to risk the unknown when endeavoring to accomplish difficult goals. It can lead to a more fulfilling life style in that one is no longer hampered by a negative mindset that often sets one up for failure before even attempting the task.

Visualization (Vanzant, 1998), allows the mind, body and soul to “open” to new possibilities previously stifled by negative thought poisoning the system with “stinkin-thinking”.

When we believe we are not worthy of what we want, we doubt we will receive it! But, through visualization, living the “as if”, one can project the achievements created in the mind’s eye!

Akin to visualization is imagery. According to Emery (2001), “using imagery can help you change a physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual state. Remember that any negative or disabling condition can be converted into a positive and life-affirming circumstance (p. 210).

At the beginning of Iyanla Vanzant’s book (1998), *One Day My Soul Just Opened Up*, written by her daughter, Gemmia L. Vanzant, she portrays the true essence of what it takes to release those “stinkin” thoughts (Ellis) that plague one and create cognitive dissonance for the individual. When one can release “negative tapes” that repeat continuously in one’s mind cognitive dissonance (stress) can be released. A portion of the poem illustrating “release” of that which, one might say, causes “temporary insanity”!

One day, my soul just opened up  
There were revelations, annihilations, and resolutions  
feelings of doubt and betrayal, vengeance and forgiveness  
memories of things I’d seen and done before  
of places I’d been, although I didn’t know when  
there were lives I’d lived  
people I’d fought  
victories I’d won  
and wars I’d lost.

One day, my soul just opened up  
and outpoured all the things  
I’d been hiding  
and denying  
and living through  
that had just happened moments before (p. 10).

Leading a healthy life style can also alleviate stress. According to Andrew Weil, M.D., *Spontaneous Healing* (1995), toxins, if not checked, can lead to a dangerous level in the body, even causing deadly cancers! Free radicals, known as antioxidant, and be found in almost all

fruits and vegetables. Deepak Chopra (1995), aligns with Weil and claims, “There is a wellspring of life within you where you can go for cleansing and transformation” (p. 52).

The Chinese have long sought out premium teas to combat illness, reduce stress and promote longevity. “Chinese tea from quality handpicked leaves are both delicious and healthy. Included in the category of Chinese tea include black tea, oolong, green tea, Pu-erh, and white tea. Examples of Chinese teas: black tea, green tea, white tea. retrieved 5/14/17 from <http://www.enjoyingtea.com/chinese-tea.html>”:



How can novice educators and other professionals combat stress in their professional lives? This paper has skirted the surface of various techniques to alleviate stress such as cognitive psychology, release, positive outlook, such as a mindset that defuses failure and maintaining a healthy life style.

Following some of the suggestions presented in this paper will lead to what Stephen Covey terms *The 8<sup>th</sup> Habit* (2004) or, “from effectiveness to Greatness”. To combat stress, “we must think anew” (p. 34).

## References

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